

Remarks

Claims 1, 2, 5-12, and 15-25 were canceled above, new claims 26-46 were added above. The above amendments and remarks which follow are in response to the Office Action mailed January 3, 2001 in which the specification was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 and claims 1, 2, 5-12 and 15-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§112, 102, and 103. The rejection of the specification and the rejections of the claims are all traversed and reconsideration of the new claims 26-46 submitted herein is respectfully requested.

Final Rejection is Premature

The Office Action mailed January 3, 2001 was made a Final Rejection; and stated that Applicants' amendment necessitated the new grounds of rejection; however, the present Office Action was the first to reject the specification, and Applicants' only previous amendment to the specification was in the Response mailed January 10, 2000 in which "a" was deleted from the specification. Therefore, there were no amendments made to the specification in Applicants' prior responses that necessitated that the specification be rejected, and that would justify a final rejection of the specification. Therefore, since the outstanding Office Action was the first to reject the specification, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the Finality of the Office Action.

Amendments to Figure 2

Figure 2 was amended herein to show that the carriers are sized to line up adjacent to one another as shown in Figure 5, and also as would be expected to produce the set of packages that were described in the specification on page 2 and are shown in Figure 1 of US 5,620,087 which was incorporated into the specification by reference. Additionally the conveyors in Figure 2 were drawn more carefully which would be apparent to a person of ordinary skill in the art. Therefore, these amendments to Figure 2 introduce no new matter and should be entered into the application.

Amendments to the Claims

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page(s) is/are captioned "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made".

35 U.S.C. §112 Rejection of the Specification

The specification and the claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 which requires that the invention be described so that a persons of ordinary skill in the art would be able to make and use the invention. The Office Action states that the specification does not sufficiently describe the structure and the structural relationship of the conveyor 12, the carriers 14 and the vertically movable platens 16. The Office Action asks, "How does conveyor move the carriers horizontally while allowing them to rise vertically?"

As stated in 35 U.S.C. §112 the invention must be described so that a person of ordinary skill in the art would be able to make and use the invention. A person of ordinary skill in the art would know to add a gate mechanism, like the one described in cols. 21 and 22 of US 5, 649,410, that was incorporated by reference, to accumulate containers while some containers were being sealed. After the sealing step, opening the gate would push "new" carriers onto the platens and push "old" carriers off of the platens onto the exit conveyor. Alternatively, a person of ordinary skill in the art might use another conveyor, such as the vacuum rails and product follower disclosed in US Patent 5,749,205 that was also incorporated by reference to push carriers onto the platens at the appropriate time. Alternatively, a persons of ordinary skill in the art may chose to turn the conveyor on and off to move the carriers onto the platen. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the 35 U.S.C. §112 rejection of the specification be withdrawn, because the invention is described sufficiently so that a persons of ordinary skill in the art can use the invention.

35 U.S.C. §112 Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5-12 and 15-25

Claims 1, 2, 5-12 and 15-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 for various reasons. The original claims were canceled and new claims were submitted herewith which hopefully have addressed all the rejections. Applicants have attempted to not claim the containers and lidstock as part of the apparatus and describe them as workpieces in the apparatus. Claim 5 was rejected because there was little structural association between the structure cited. Claim 5 is new claim 26, and Applicants added more associations. Claims 7 and 11 were rejected as unclear for merely setting forth function and no structure to perform them. Applicants disagree, because there are structures in the claims (new claims 28 and 38), perhaps the Examiner might reconsider or clarify the reason for rejection, if it is to be repeated. The reason for the rejection of claim 9 was not repeated in new claim 36. The rejection of claim 15 has

been addressed in new claims 31 and 41 by specifying that the print is relative to the area to receive the print, which was described on page 11 of the specification; therefore, it addresses the rejection without introducing new matter.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the 35 U.S.C. §112 rejections of the claims not be repeated for new claims 26-46, and instead be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5-7, 9-11 and 21-24

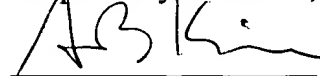
The claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 over Giovannone, US 5,379,572 (hereinafter '572). '572 was cited as showing a plurality of carriers, a plurality of moveable lifts, a plurality of platens, a plurality of mandrels, a lidstock maneuvering system. Although that may all be true '572 fails to show many of Applicants claimed elements, such as adjacent platens, discrete carriers, the formation of a set of packages; therefore the 35 U.S.C. §102 rejection of claims 26-46 would be improper, and therefore should be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 5-7, 9-11 and 21-24

The claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over '572 and Edwards, US Patent 5,565,059 (hereinafter '059), because '059 teaches inspection of the alignment of the printed matter on the lidstock within the machine to the blisters. Applicants traverse, and respectfully request reconsideration. Although '059 teaches sealing a lidstock to multiple containers to form a set of packages, and inspection of the printed matter, neither '059 nor '572, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests multiple platens or multiple mandrels and individual carriers to provide for improved sealing in a set of packages as Applicants have claimed. Therefore, Applicants request that the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection be withdrawn.

For all the reasons above, it is believed that claims 26-46 are in condition for allowance. Allowance of the claims is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Claims 1, 2, 5-12, and 15-25 were canceled as follows:

1. ——— (Amended twice) ~~An apparatus for packaging contact lenses, said apparatus comprising:~~

~~a plurality of discrete carriers, said carriers being movable within said apparatus; [and]~~

~~a plurality of contact lens containers, each container having a recess, a sealing flange about the recess, and a contact lens within said recess, a single one of said containers being mounted on a single one of said carriers; and~~

~~a lidstock maneuvering system for placing lidstock over said recess and said sealing flange of said containers; wherein when said lidstock is sealed to said sealing flange, said containers and lidstock form sealed packages.~~

2. ——— (Amended once) ~~The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each carrier has a cavity, each [container having a bowl,] said [bowl] recess of said container being [receiving] received in said cavity of said carrier.~~

5. ——— (Amended twice) ~~The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said apparatus further compris[ing]es:~~

~~a plurality of lifts;~~

~~a plurality of platens, each of said platens being individually supported by one of said lifts, each of said [containers] carriers being mounted on a respective one of said platens; and~~

~~a mandrel disposed above said platens; [and]~~

~~wherein said lifts apply pressure, within a predetermined range, to each of said containers.~~

6. ~~(Amended once) The apparatus according to claim 5, [further comprising a wherein said lidstock maneuvering system is operative to engage a lidstock and to position said lidstock between said mandrel and said plurality of platens.~~

7. ~~(Amended once) The apparatus according to claim [5] 6, wherein said lidstock has a thickness and said container has a thickness, and further wherein said mandrel is selectively moveable between a retracted upper position and an engaged lower position to seal said lidstock to said containers, and wherein in said lower position, a pressure applied by said mandrel against each of said platens is maintained within said predetermined range by the respective lifts, thereby compensating for tolerance differences in the thickness of said containers and the thickness of said lidstock to ensure that an adequate seal is formed between said lidstock and each of said containers.~~

8. ~~The apparatus according to claim 5, further comprising a pressure transducer being connected to said lifts, said pressure transducer generating a signal indicative of the pressure applied by each of said lifts.~~

9. ~~(Amended twice) The [An] apparatus of claim 1, wherein [for automatically packaging contact lenses,] said apparatus further comprises[ing]:~~

~~{at least one carrier;~~

~~a plurality of contact lens containers being mounted on said at least one carrier;}~~

~~a plurality of lifts;~~

~~a plurality of mandrels disposed above each of said [at least one] carriers, each of said mandrels being individually supported by one of said lifts;~~

~~wherein said lifts apply pressure, within a predetermined range, to each of said mandrels.~~

10. — ~~(Amended twice) The apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising a lidstock maneuvering system operative to engage a lidstock and to position said lidstock between said mandrels and said [at least one] carriers.~~

11. — ~~(Amended twice) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein said lidstock has a thickness and said container has a thickness, wherein said mandrels are [is] selectively moveable between a retracted upper position and an engaged lower position to seal said lidstock to said containers, and wherein in said lower position, a pressure applied by said mandrels against each of said [platens] containers is maintained within said predetermined range by the respective lifts, thereby compensating for tolerance differences in the thickness of said containers and the thickness of said lidstock to ensure that an adequate seal is formed between said lidstock and each of said containers.~~

12. — ~~The apparatus according to claim 9, further comprising a pressure transducer being connected to said lifts, said pressure transducer generating a signal indicative of the pressure applied by each of said lifts.~~

15. — ~~(Amended once) The [An] apparatus [for packaging contact lenses, said apparatus comprising] of claim 1, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises:~~

~~a lidstock having indicia printed thereon[, said lidstock being fed from a roll under tension]; and~~

~~a vision alignment inspection system having means for checking the print quality on said lidstock and for simultaneously checking for registration of said lidstock within said apparatus.~~

16. — ~~(Amended once) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said lidstock~~

~~maneuvering system further compris[ing]es a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from [said] a roll under tension into said printing system and said cutting system, and said vision alignment inspection system is located after said printing system.~~

17. — (Amended once) The apparatus of claim 15, ~~wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further compris[ing]es a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from [said] a roll under tension into [a] said printing system and said cutting system and said alignment inspection system is located between said printing system and said cutting system.~~

18. — The apparatus of claim 15, ~~further comprising a heat seal apparatus, wherein said lidstock is mechanically controlled after said vision alignment inspection system to prevent misregistration of said lidstock in said heat seal apparatus.~~

19. — (Amended once) The apparatus of claim [17] 16, ~~wherein said cutting system is located after said printing system.~~

20. — (Amended once) The apparatus of claim [18] 17, ~~wherein said cutting system is located after said printing system.~~

—21. — The apparatus of claim 7, ~~wherein multiple said containers are sealed to said lidstock to form a set of packages.~~

—22. — The apparatus of claim 11, ~~wherein multiple said containers are sealed to said lidstock to form a set of packages.~~

23. — The apparatus of claim 6, ~~wherein said lidstock is held in position by said lidstock maneuvering system between said mandrel and said plurality of platens until said mandrel contacts said lidstock.~~

~~24. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein said lidstock is held in position by said lidstock maneuvering system between said plurality of mandrels and said platen until said mandrels contact said lidstock.~~

~~25. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein multiple said containers are sealed to said lidstock to form a set of packages.~~

New claims 26-46 were added as follows:

--26. An apparatus for packaging contact lenses in a plurality of contact lens containers, each container having a recess, a sealing flange about said recess, and a contact lens within said recess, a plurality of said containers being sealed in said apparatus to a contiguous lidstock to form a set of packages, said apparatus comprising :

a plurality of lifts;

a plurality of platens located adjacent to one another, each of said platens being individually supported by one of said lifts;

a plurality of discrete carriers, said carriers being movable within said apparatus onto said plurality of said platens, such that each of said carriers is mounted on a respective one of said platens , a single one of said containers being mounted on a single one of said carriers;

a lidstock maneuvering system for placing lidstock over a plurality of said containers; and

a mandrel disposed above said platens;

wherein pressure is applied to said lidstock and said flanges of said containers by said mandrel and said platens to adhere said lidstock to said containers.

27. The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein each carrier has a cavity, each said recess of said container being received in said cavity of said carrier.

28. The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein said lidstock has a thickness and said container has a thickness, and further wherein said mandrel is selectively moveable between a retracted upper position and an engaged lower position to seal said lidstock to said containers, and wherein in said lower position, a pressure applied by said mandrel against each of said platens is maintained within a predetermined range by the respective lifts, thereby compensating for tolerance differences in the thickness of said containers and the thickness of

said lidstock to ensure that an adequate seal is formed between said lidstock and each of said containers.

29. The apparatus according to claim 28, further comprising a pressure transducer being connected to said lifts, and further wherein said lifts apply pressure to said containers within a predetermined range, as determined by said pressure transducer.
30. The apparatus according to claim 26 wherein said mandrel is heated.
31. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises:
 - a vision alignment inspection system having means for checking the print quality on said lidstock and for simultaneously checking for registration of said lidstock within said apparatus based on the location of said print.
32. The apparatus of claim 31, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from a roll under tension into said printing system and said cutting system, and said vision alignment inspection system is located after said printing system.
33. The apparatus of claim 31, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from a roll under tension into said printing system and said cutting system and said alignment inspection system is located between said printing system and said cutting system.
34. The apparatus of claim 31, further comprising a heat seal apparatus, wherein said lidstock is mechanically controlled after said vision alignment inspection

system to prevent misregistration of said lidstock in said heat seal apparatus.

35. The apparatus of claim 28, wherein said lidstock is held in position by said lidstock maneuvering system over said containers until said mandrel contacts said lidstock in said engaged lower position.

36. The apparatus of claim 26, wherein said apparatus further comprises:

said mandrel further comprising a plurality of dies each having a die cylinder;

said dies disposed above each of said carriers;

wherein said cylinders apply pressure, within a predetermined range, to each of said dies.

37. An apparatus for packaging contact lenses in a plurality of contact lens containers, each container having a recess, a sealing flange about said recess, and a contact lens within said recess, a plurality of said containers being sealed in said apparatus to a contiguous lidstock to form a set of packages, said apparatus comprising :

a platen capable of supporting a plurality of carriers;

a plurality of discrete carriers, said carriers being movable within said apparatus onto said platen so that said carriers are located adjacent to one another;

a lidstock maneuvering system for placing lidstock over a plurality of said containers; and

a plurality of lifts;

a plurality of mandrels disposed above said platen; each of said mandrels being individually supported by one of said lifts and such that each of said carriers is located below each of said mandrels;

whereby pressure is applied to said lidstock and said flange of each said container by said mandrels and said platen to adhere said lidstock to said containers.

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38. The apparatus according to claim 37, wherein said lidstock has a thickness and said container has a thickness, and further wherein said mandrels are selectively moveable between a retracted upper position and an engaged lower position to seal said lidstock to said containers, and wherein in said lower position, a pressure applied by said mandrels against said platen is maintained within a predetermined range by the respective lifts, thereby compensating for tolerance differences in the thickness of said containers and the thickness of said lidstock to ensure that an adequate seal is formed between said lidstock and each of said containers.
39. The apparatus according to claim 37, further comprising a pressure transducer being connected to said lifts, and further wherein said lifts apply pressure to said containers within a predetermined range, as determined by said pressure transducer.
40. The apparatus according to claim 37 wherein said mandrel is heated.
41. The apparatus of claim 37, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises:
a vision alignment inspection system having means for checking the print quality on said lidstock and for simultaneously checking for registration of said lidstock within said apparatus based on the location of said print.
42. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further comprises a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from a roll under tension into said printing system and said cutting system, and said vision alignment inspection system is located after said printing system.
43. The apparatus of claim 41, wherein said lidstock maneuvering system further

comprises a printing system and a cutting system, wherein said lidstock is fed from a roll under tension into said printing system and said cutting system and said alignment inspection system is located between said printing system and said cutting system.

44. The apparatus of claim 41, further comprising a heat seal apparatus, wherein said lidstock is mechanically controlled after said vision alignment inspection system to prevent misregistration of said lidstock in said heat seal apparatus.
45. The apparatus of claim 42, wherein said cutting system is located after said printing system.
46. The apparatus of claim 38, wherein said lidstock is held in position by said lidstock maneuvering system between said mandrels and said platen until said mandrel contacts said lidstock.--

Fig. 1

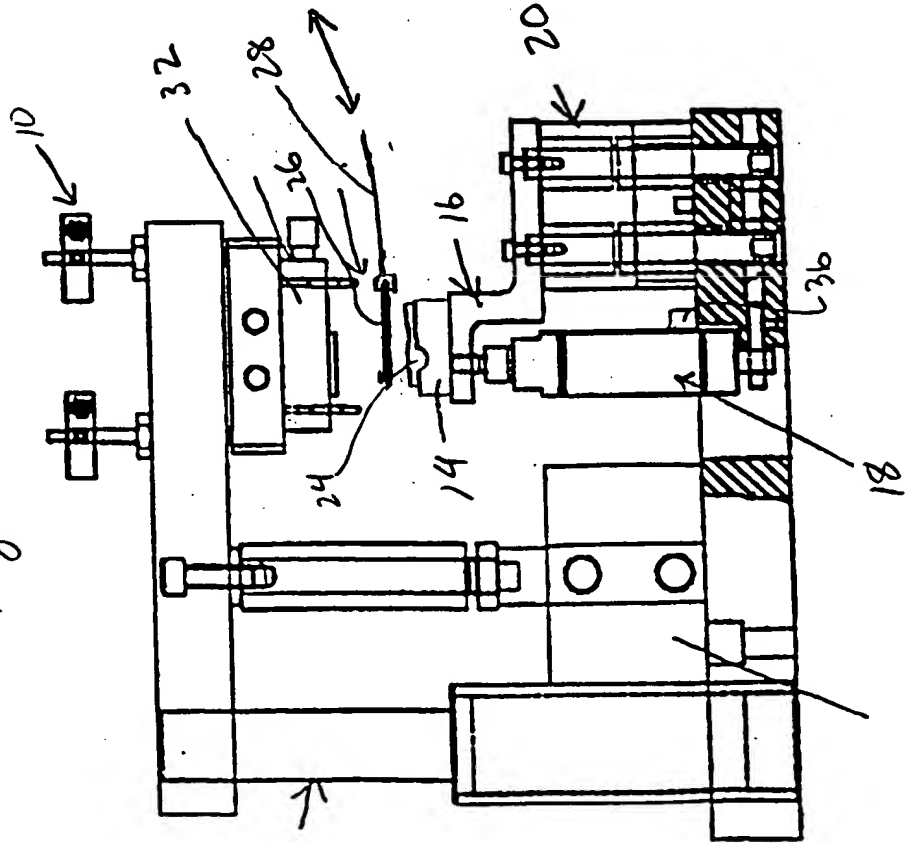


Fig. 2

